

Contributions

THE LORD'S SUPPER. No. 6.

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Was it to be perpetuated in the church? When is it to be observed? Two questions. But they concern us and should concern every follower of Christ. What if Jesus did, the night in which he was betrayed take bread, likewise also the cup "after supper," if we hear no more of the institution in the early church? Jesus did many things, that he did not intend for his followers to do. How do we know that Jesus intended that this supper should be observed by the church? We answer, (1) That the apostles so understood him. This is proven by their teaching. A long time after Jesus gave the church this new service we find it still in the church, and the apostles striving to preserve it in its simplicity. Read how they exposed its abuse in I Cor. 11. This was twenty-six years after the day of Pentecost. At this period in the history of the church, Paul, the inspired man of God, is pleading with the Corinthian brethren to save this supper from pagan corruptions. Surrounded as they were with a people of banquets and sensualists, it would require extreme caution to prevent the same irreverence and hilarity from taking possession of this beautiful symbol of hope, held by the early Christians. Paul therefore rushes to its rescue. With a severeness characteristic of the man he exposes their gluttony. His argument lays bare their sensuality. Lashing them for such a dishonor of the church of God and a disregard for the feelings and welfare of their poorer brethren he stirs them to a sense of their shame. Then with a tenderness such as has moved many a stout heart to tears he says, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry one for the other."

Paul has done his part to preserve to the church this service. The Holy Spirit has given us his censure of those who would corrupt the service and his defense of it. Alas, how many have profited by what he said! The very words of Paul are used to *explain away* this ordinance which he rescued from the corruptions of pagan civilization. Is it because Christians do not like to eat together that they make Paul say what he does not say about the Lord's Supper? No. Almost every church—the big church, the little church, the country church, the city church, the downtown church or the mission church—are often found eating together, laughing, jesting and making merry. They do not object eating with one another and paying for what they eat too, if you do not interfere with their *manner* of eating. But the *manner of eating* is the very

thing that Paul did interfere with, and there are hundreds of people who never would have their manners interfered with by Paul or any one else. Hence, they can see so clearly that Paul forbids eating in the church—unless it is ice-cream and cake and you pay a quarter. Then you hear them down all opposition by crying "What harm is it?"

So, many years after Christ had eaten his last supper with his disciples we find Paul freeing this service from abuses and charging them "when ye come together to eat, tarry one for the other."

But Paul is not the only one who has taught us that the early church observed this supper. In II Pet. 2:13, Peter refers to this meal which he calls the love feast. "Men that count it pleasure to revel in the day time, spots and blemishes, revelling in their love feasts while they feast with you." This epistle was written about 68 or 69 A. D., or thirty-five years after Jesus "rose from supper" to wash the disciples' feet. If Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians, ten years before Peter wrote these words took the supper out of the church it is evident that Peter knew nothing about it. Was not ten years long enough to find it out? Did Paul teach against the supper and Peter still permit its observance, like many of our modern divines who have been baptized (?) by the Holy Ghost? Is the Holy Spirit the author of confusion?

Take the testimony of Jude. He says in verse 12, "These are they who are hidden rocks in your love feasts when they feast with you." Most writers agree in placing the time of the writing of this epistle after the fall of Jerusalem, A. D., 70. If Jesus did not intend his last supper to be perpetuated by his followers, it is evident at this date that they were wrong. It is still in the church—and by divine sanction just as certainly as these writers were divine writers.

Examine your commentaries on these passages and learn that the scholarship of the world is a unit in declaring that the early church observed this supper or love feast.

NO MAN LIVETH UNTO HIMSELF

GEO. A. RUFF

It is a high duty to measure ourselves by God's standard of service. It matters not what others think or do, our obligation is to be determined by the expressed will of God. Because our neighbor does this or that it does not follow that we either should or should not do the same. Our duty is unrelented to his so far as its measure and obligation are concerned. These each for himself must find by the prayerful study of the Word. Yet we suffer ourselves to be affected by the example of others. If it is

in the right direction it may not affect us injuriously, save as it may lead us to essay too great a work, or too great a gift. Whilst we are to provoke one another to good works, we are not to be carried away by an unreasoning enthusiasm. It is true that in this direction we are seldom liable to be led too far, yet we should strive to be loyal to an intelligent and controlling principle, founded on consecration to the truth as revealed in the teachings of Christ and his apostles. But when the example inclines us to abate our zeal or to diminish our contributions to God's cause it behooves us to proceed with greatest care. Our selfish inclinations will support the pernicious example. Our natural indignation will be apt to degenerate to a dull hate. Seeking to express our disapproval we find ourselves registering it in corresponding diminution of our own gifts and services. What another man does or fails to do is no excuse to you or to me. To our God each for himself must stand or fall. But whilst in the last analysis each man is responsible for his own life, it is equally true that each is responsible also for what he makes the lives of others.

What example have I set? What influence have I wrought? We may well consider in attempting to estimate our standing with God. So before we decide to omit attendance upon one Sunday or mid-week service or to cut in half our contribution, we should not only ask ourselves if this is our duty by the Book, but also as a side light on the Book itself. What will its influence be on others? If your accustomed place in the house of God is conspicuously vacant, first one and then another will begin to say, "If Brother Henry can stay away so can I, for he is not much older nor more infirm, has no farther to go than I." Those younger miss the inspiration of your presence and the rebuke to any disposition to irregularity of indifference on their part which your faithfulness gave. So the example multiplied its destructive effects. This is yet more evident in finance. For example, you are rated as one of the strong men of the church. You conclude to cut down your contribution to current expenses from \$100 to \$50, the effect runs up and down the list of subscribers. Brother Broadly sees what you have done and says, "If Henry will pay no more than that, cut my last year's subscription from \$200 to \$100." Brother Thomas says, "Broadly can buy and sell me. If \$100 is enough for him it is too much for me. I will not help carry him; cut me down to \$50." And so it goes, until that \$50 cut has taken not less than \$500 out of the treasury. The effect upon others of our example is always to be studied. No man liveth unto himself.

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